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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 006446

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/SE AND EUR/CACEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/26/2015

TAGS: PREL PHUM TU AZ

SUBJECT: TURKISH MFA ON AZERBAIJAN ELECTIONS: QUIET

PRESSURE

REF: A. BAKU 1618

1B. SIEBENTRITT/POLASCHIK E-MAILS OCT 25

Classified By: Political Counselor Janice G. Weiner for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

Summary

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11. (C) Turkey's MFA says it has approached the GOAJ at all levels to express its desire for a free, fair, and transparent elections on November 6, but prefers not to do so publicly. The GOT expects Aliyev to win comfortably even without cheating. Turkey is sending a sizable contingent of official and private election observers, and is ready to assist with providing ink for finger inking if this becomes necessary. End Summary.

Quiet Turkish Diplomacy

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12. (C) MFA Department Head for South Caucasus Suleyman Gokce told Poloff October 25 that Turkey has encouraged the Azerbaijan government "at every level" to ensure a free, fair and transparent elections process on November 6. During a recent meeting in Istanbul, Turkish FM Gul raised Turkey's interest in a credible elections process with his Azeri counterpart, according to Gokce. In addition, Prime Minister Erdogan is scheduled to telephone President Aliyev in the next couple of days to express Turkey's hopes for a good elections process. Former Turkish President Suleyman Demirel is also expected to call Aliyev on the same subject. Meanwhile, Gokce reported, the Turkish embassy in Baku is maintaining contact with opposition figures and opposition personality Ali Kerimli recently gave a series of talks in Ankara.

13. (C) Gokce said the GOT believes Aliyev will win reelection by a comfortable margin even without cheating. Ankara is watching the situation carefully but expects no instability in Azerbaijan around the elections at this time. We asked why the GOT has made no recent public statements concerning the need for free, fair, and transparent elections in Azerbaijan. Gokce responded that Turkey believes quiet pressure at the leadership level is more effective; public pressure risks embarrassing the Aliyev government with potentially counter-productive results. Gokce appreciated our providing copies of U.S. statement on Azerbaijan at the OSCE as well as A/S Fried's October 20 speech at a Baku university.

Turkish Assistance -- Observers and Ink

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14. (U) Turkey has contributed 50 short term and two long term monitors to the ODIHR elections observation mission. Observers from the Turkish Grand National Assembly, parliamentary offices and NGOs will also take part, according to the MFA.

15. (SBU) Gokce had also heard that the GOAJ had approved the use of finger inking for the elections. Gokce said Turkey had long urged the GOAJ (again, privately) to do this and had identified sources of ink in Turkey. He said Turkey is eager to help with provision of ink on short notice if necessary.

Comment - No "Color Revolution" Please

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16. (C) Turkey has developed strong commercial and political ties with Azerbaijan. It is clearly hoping for a credible elections process in Azerbaijan, but one that leaves Aliyev firmly in power.

MCELDOWNEY